/18 cont./

766 787 times, no noticeable movement has been observed, the answer is negative, and one proceeds with the corpse all the way to the end of the crowd ranged on either side. Everyone endeavors to be present on such occasions in order not to cast any blame upon himself or to arouse suspicion.

If, however, the answer is in the affirmative, then one asks whether the right person or a close relative of his is here; if the answer to this is also affirmative, one proceeds to inquire about the degree of blood relationship until one has finally discovered who the actual person is. Since this happens in the presence of so many persons as witnesses, it is regarded as valid proof, and the corpse is buried. However incomprehensible and impossible this may appear, this procedure is nonetheless actually practiced constantly among the Bush Negroes. I have been an eyewitness several times. [123]

695 [693] A few days later the person indicated, in case he was not present at the above-mentioned inquiry, is tracked down, if necessary fetched forcibly, and brought before the governor or the chief, who questions him in the presence of the captains or the council members. In case of denial, he is offered something to drink, which, however, he will not accept if he is guilty, since it has become apparent that whoever drinks it with a pounding or uneasy heart frequently manifests immediate symptoms, such as vomiting, swelling, chlorosis, and so forth. If the person has been prepared to brave this (in spite of the conviction of his misdeed), he is put to death by means of the most horrible and unheard-of tortures, whereas in the case of confession he is forced with the whip to reveal whom else he has poisoned during his life. [681]

696 682 All the relatives of the poisoned person are then called in order to be present at the punishment and to pull on his ears with all possible force by means of a pair of pincers, one after another. Subsequently a bowl with pinda blaf is set before him, in which a turtle must be boiled, as well as a tomtom made of ripe bananas. All this, after all, is regarded as the tastiest food. He is then /19/ again severely beaten with a whip, whereupon he must eat what has been prepared for him, and immediately afterwards [262]

/19 cont./

696 682 he must sit unbound on a large fire arranged in gridiron fashion, so that he burns completely to ashes.

[695] Never, however, is an accused put to death before three months have elapsed after the inquiry, because there still might possibly be a chance that his innocence will be proved.

682 [695] [672] In the case of a confession and the supplying of clear proof that the deceased gave cause to be poisoned, the culprit frequently escapes with a light punishment; sometimes also forgiveness is granted with general approval, with the condition that the culprit take upon himself to the third generation the obligation to be of service in everything to the descendants of the maltreated person.

681 672 It may also happen that in the case of various other misdeeds the perpetrator is completely forgiven for his misdeed, but that upon his descendants to the third generation there is imposed the obligation to render slave services exactly as in the case of poisoning.

681 The majority of these slave services ordinarily consist of giving money, strong drink, or the necessities of life, as a result of which hard work must often be done in order to be able to fulfill them. Every day they are afraid that this or that may be exacted from them. There are indications, however, that not too great a misuse is made of this.

765 Twelve months after the burial there always takes place a great gathering in the hut of the deceased, at which time the period of mourning ends with rejoicing. Exuberant festivities are then celebrated, and that night an unusually great amount is drunk, eaten, and honor salutes fired. Everyone in the vicinity, insofar as he is able, is present on this occasion.

This festival is called tesa, the ending of the mourning period, and begins after one of the nearest relatives, who enjoys the greatest respect, takes a large calabash filled with water in his right hand and with it slowly walks forth out of the hut along the other dwellings nearby and is followed by a large number of people, during which he here and there sprinkles the water, [775] trowéwatra, in drops on the ground, saying: Like this water, the soul of the deceased will also be pure, and all that was dear to him will remain tranquilly on earth without being disturbed by him who as spirit finds himself in the spirit world.

/224 cont./

775 A yɔrka exercising a kunu may also demand that another
784 smaller fraga tiki be erected for it beside the principal fraga
769 tiki of its lo. In the villages of the Refugee Blacks one often
778 sees these little crosses provided with white veils like the main
613 fraga tiki, planted beside it a little obliquely.

The notion of the kunu exercised by a yɔrka explains the
775 rarity of murder among the Refugee Blacks. How would you
784 dare to kill someone when, as soon as it is freed from his body,
674 his yɔrka will have full latitude to make you sick, to make
tree branches fall across your path, to cause to suffer and to
775 kill all those dear to you? If someone is blinded by hate, it
784 is the idea of suicide which will dominate him. In October,
762 1952 we were able to observe this reaction in a man who had
just been subject to a deep humiliation: "I am going to kill
my body in order to go to kill that man and his whole family,"
he said to us, prey to a fit of rage; fortunately, when the fit
had passed, he came back to a more sound outlook on things.

775 It is to be noted that a yɔrka cannot exercise a kunu
784 against its own lineage. This notion explains why, in the times
613 when they exercised absolute authority, tribal chiefs had those
696 condemned to death executed by men of the same lineage.
[171] Apparently similar practices were the rule in olden days in
several African kingdoms, which allows one to think that notions
analogous to those of the kunu may be rather widespread there.

784 Situation of the various lineages with respect to the kunu. There
613 we touch on one of the most secret aspects of the social life of
the Refugee Blacks. Years of living among them are necessary
in order to obtain precise information on the nature and the
mode of action of the kunu acting on the various lineages.

784 Nearly all the entities which now exercise their kunu on the
613 Boni have been in their lineages since a very ancient period,
428 to the point where the name of their first bearer is forgotten.
They are transmitted inexorably from generation to generation.
In the course of the ages, the kunu have accumulated, and now
certain lineages are living with four, five, or even six kunu.